

CHAPTER FOUR

Demons, Devils and Witches: The Occult in Heavy Metal Music

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Eugene Martone, his Fender Telecaster slung around his shoulder, walks tentatively onto the stage. He is here to play for the soul of his friend, bluesman Willie Brown, a harmonica player who in his youth made a deal with the Devil in return for musical virtuosity. To represent his interests, Old Scratch has chosen Jack Butler, the archetypal heavy-metal guitarist: brooding, long-haired with leather pants and a bad attitude. Butler carelessly lugs a heavy-metal axe onto the stage and the contest begins. Initially, it sounds as if Butler has the edge. His screaming, distorted guitar soars and crashes, transcending the blues as his fingers fly supernaturally up and down the fretboard. Strings are bent to breaking in this display of awesome virtuosity. It looks all over for Martone but from somewhere the unsure youth conjures complicated classical riffs and intoxicating rhythms in a dazzling display of speed and musical genius. He snatches Brown's soul back from Scratch as Butler, unable to match the youngster's prowess, throws his guitar to the ground and stalks darkly off through the crowd.

This scene, featuring the climactic guitar duel, is taken from *Crossroads*,¹ an otherwise ordinary movie from 1986, but what this nine-minute scene succinctly summarises is the close musical and thematic relationship between heavy metal music and the blues. Satanism has long been associated with heavy metal. Concert goers display the 'devil horns' hand gesture legendarily popularised by Black Sabbath vocalist

¹ Eugene was played by Ralph Macchio and Jack Butler by guitarist Steve Vai.

Ronnie James Dio. Song lyrics often have satanic or dark supernatural themes. Album covers are resplendent with demons or depict medieval encounters with mythical or magical figures. The names of heavy metal bands often incorporate Christian and Jewish religious and occult terms; examples include Exodus, Testament, Cathedral, Armored Saint, Morbid Angel, Black Sabbath, Demon, and Possessed. This chapter will investigate the association of heavy metal music with Satanism and the occult, tracing its lineage from American blues to the British Blues Boom of the 1960s to the beginnings of heavy metal in the late 1960s to the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) that emerged in the 1970s.

Rarely have lyrics come under such close scrutiny as they have with heavy metal. The supernatural themes elaborated within the genre have attracted considerable media attention with several court cases proceeding against bands and record companies, whose music allegedly caused young people to suicide in response to the dark lyrical messages.² Further, youth rebellion, graveyard desecration, animal sacrifice, and other antisocial and offensive behaviours have been linked to heavy metal by sensationalist

² Ozzy Osbourne and Judas Priest successfully defended court cases brought by parents of teenagers who committed suicide allegedly incited by their music. California teenager John McCollom committed suicide while listening to the song *Suicide Solution*. McCollom's parents sued Osbourne's record company, CBS (McCollom v. CBS, Inc. 1988). Another youth suicided to the same song. Again, the law suit was unsuccessful (Waller v. CBS Inc. 1991). The parents of a Nevada teenage boy sued CBS when he committed suicide after listening to the Judas Priest album *Stained Glass* (Vance v. CBS Inc. 1985); see Stack; Gundlach; and Reeves.

media, conservative politicians, and parent groups often with little or no supporting evidence.³

With the themes of heavy metal attracting such close analysis, it becomes useful to determine the ultimate sources of the lyrical content. The lineage of heavy metal has been well-established. The genre originated with Birmingham band Black Sabbath, who emerged towards the end of the British Blues Boom that spawned other influential bands including Cream and Led Zeppelin.⁴ These bands in turn drew their influences from the pre- and post-war American blues, maintaining not only a structural and melodic connection but also a thematic one (see Walser, *Running with the Devil* 8-9 and Wright 370).

The Blues

The blues evolved from the impassioned music of a people violently abducted from their homes in Senegal, the Guinea coast, the Niger delta and the Congo in West Africa to an unknown territory inexplicably hostile (Stearns 17). As a musical form, the blues was fully formed by the end of the nineteenth century (Ferris 123), having evolved from the field hollers that eased the burden of picking cotton. Slaves sang to ease the erosion of their dignity and their abuse at the hands of their white oppressors (see Springer). Along with the blues evolved a lyrical vocabulary that ambiguously concealed criticisms of their abuse at the hands of plantation owners, providing a passive defiance and veiling unsuitable topics such as lurid sexuality or the expression of African

³ Cf. Breen. The exception to this would be the association of 'Esoterrorism' with Black Metal bands in Norway; see also Arnett, *Metalheads* 122-29.

⁴ The British Blues Boom occurred from about 1962 until 1970. It coincided with an interest in the 'race records' of American blues artists and was fuelled by their European tours.

spiritual beliefs. Though these songs were heard by the white folk, they remained unaware of the actual content of the lyrics.

From the beginning, blues was known as the ‘devil’s music.’ It readily moved from the fields to the juke joints and house parties, an after-hours release from the day’s drudgery, becoming prevalent in the 1930s. This burgeoning popularity saw blues become serious competition for the gospel music of the church (Ferris 83). A half-remembered African belief named the guitar, as Alan Lomax argues (360), as the ride of the devil and preachers exploited this link in order to boost church attendance at the expense of that for blues. Further, both blues musicians and preachers were viewed in the black community as ‘men of words’ or ‘good talkers,’ and as such they competed for the same audience (Szwed 115). Though blues songs and spirituals shared certain structural similarities, they differed in lyrical content: blues spoke to the mundane anxieties of individuals; the spirituals addressed the sacred concerns of the larger community. The only hope for an improved situation lay in admission to heaven after death and anything jeopardising this ultimate reward was shunned.

In addition to singing, dancing was considered a valid way to express religious fervour in the black churches of the south, even though the dances were often lascivious. Dancing was considered proper as long as the legs were not crossed as they were in European-style dancing with a partner (see Puckett 60 and Jones 43). To dance in such a manner was to embrace Satan; and those musicians providing the musical backdrop could expect a similar fate. To exacerbate matters, preachers would sermonise about abstinence from sin and the evils of blues, frequently while running juke joints in their homes. Blues artists railed against this hypocrisy and blues became the voice of rejection of so-called respectable, but ultimately phoney, church-going society.

Blues musicians often sang about vodou, a spiritual and magical system derived from Yoruba traditions. To a race of people obsessed with being ‘white’ and rejecting their black skin – a topic discussed at length in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* – this remembrance of African religion was devilish. White masters and missionaries had little tolerance for these folk beliefs and indeed the Christian missionaries associated the devil with the Yoruba god Èsù or the Haitian voodoo loa Papa Legba (Davis 105-6), long associated with the crossroads and the intermediary between humans and gods. This association is also exploited in the movie *Crossroads* where the devil goes by the name of ‘Legba.’

Because of this diabolical association, many blues musicians considered themselves to be in league with Satan. Peetie Wheatstraw (real name William Bunch) marketed himself as the ‘Devil’s Son-in-Law’ or the ‘High Sheriff from Hell,’ As Robert Palmer states in *Deep Blues* (127). Many other blues artists felt that if they were going to be labelled as cohorts of the devil then they should play that role (Oliver 255), preferring honest performance to the hypocrisy of the preachers.

These shadowy associations formed the backdrop to the blues of America’s south. As time passed, intriguing legends arose: most are familiar with the story of Robert Johnson,⁵ whose tale was captivating enough to inspire the feature movie *Crossroads*. Just an average guitarist, Johnson sat in with Johnny Shines, Willie Brown,⁶ Son House, and Charlie Patton. He disappeared from the scene for a year, only to reappear a consummate musician (Murray 109-10). Not only was Johnson morally suspect as a

⁵ Robert Johnson was born in Hazlehurst Mississippi in 1911, dying in 1938. He was the illegitimate son of Julia Dodds and farm worker Noah Johnson.

⁶ In the movie *Crossroads*, Willie Brown is depicted as a harmonica player though he was a guitar player; see Fusco, *Crossroads*.

guitarist, he was rumoured to have entered into a formal arrangement with the devil. According to legend, Johnson had gone down to the crossroads, just as Dr Faustus did in that famous legend (Puhvel 169), and signed a pact with the devil, delivering his soul in return for musical virtuosity, fame and all its trappings. This was to be Robert Johnson's escape from the extreme poverty into which he was born (Patterson 3). His song 'Crossroad Blues' reportedly portrays the scene of a man 'standin' at the crossroads' and 'sinkin' down' but receiving the 'crossroad blues.'

Certainly he lived as if he had a hellhound on his tail; soon becoming famous with an adoring woman in every town. In 1936, and again in 1937, he recorded twenty-nine songs (six of which made explicit reference to Satan), providing him with more money than he had ever seen in his short life. Unfortunately, Johnson fulfilled his part of the bargain sooner than anticipated. A jealous husband poisoned him with strychnine after a performance in 1938. He took several days to die and renounced the devil on his deathbed, at the last appealing to God to save his soul.

It is difficult to say just when this legend first gained currency. Some claim Son House told the story to thrill European audiences during the 1960s blues revival, actually relating the story of Tommy Johnson. A decade earlier, Tommy had likewise sold his soul to the devil in the form of Legba in return for prowess. It was said that he went to the crossroads and a big black man strode up and tuned his guitar at the stroke of midnight (Murray 111). In fact, the open tunings used extensively in blues were generally associated with the devil, and Robert Johnson's use of them was seen as further evidence of collusion. Johnson's style has influenced generations of guitar players who in turn forged impressive careers of their own, including Muddy Waters, Elmore James, Eric Clapton, Peter Green, and Jimmy Page, who in turn inspired Brian

Robertson (Thin Lizzy, Motörhead), Phil Campbell (Motörhead), and Steve Clark (Def Leppard) among others.

The British Blues Boom

In the United States, blues was presented on ‘race records’ for a black audience. Though Elvis Presley drew much of his influence from the genre, white listeners were shocked by the raw emotions and blatant sexuality conveyed by the music. By the mid-sixties, however, blues had become enormously popular with British folk and pop artists, many of whom had begun their careers in blues outfits. Pink Floyd took their name from two obscure blues singers from rural South Carolina: Pink Anderson and Floyd Council (Boyd 43). Other bands following this route included the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, the Animals, and Jethro Tull.

From the early 1950s, black blues artists began to tour Europe to wide critical acclaim and this was to be the first significant white audience that blues garnered. Big Bill Broonzy toured in 1951 with his twelve-string guitar. Muddy Waters first toured Britain in 1958 and initially received a hostile reception because he played electric guitar rather than a ‘traditional’ acoustic one (Palmer, *Rock & Roll* 115). Big Bill Broonzy, Sonny Boy Williamson, Victoria Spivey, Otis Rush, and John Lee Hooker also became popular as a result of these early visits (Clayson 44). Blues records were difficult to buy but nevertheless it was through this medium that the English musicians dug beyond the works of the touring artists, to an earlier generation of American blues players that included Robert Johnson. The albums had to be ordered in from the United States and a few stores stocked them in London (Clayson 50).

Some musicians, in particular Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page, learnt all they could about the music and the people that originated the form (Coleman 38),

evolving into blues virtuosos at a time when guitarists were traditionally subservient to the vocalist. They were the first guitar heroes, combining the rock 'n' roll of Chuck Berry with the deep blues of Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf (Walser, *Running with the Devil* 9). Clapton, then with the super-group Cream, worshipped at the altar of Robert Johnson, performing several blues covers including Johnson's *Crossroads Blues*, which became simply *Crossroads* (Coleman 38). Clapton fully immersed himself in the lore surrounding this legendary performer, intrigued by Johnson's diabolical connections. The result became evident in an interview he gave in July 1974, included in Palmer's *Deep Blues*, following a concert with his post-Cream band, Derek and the Dominos:

Once with the Dominos, we dropped some acid in San Francisco and apart from the fact that the guitar was made of rubber, every bad lick I had, every naughty lick, blues lick [...] whatever you want to call it, turned the audience into all these devils in sort of red coats and things. And then I'd play a sweet one, and they all turned into angels. I prefer playing to angels personally. (128-29)

Because of this hallucinogenic vision, Clapton steered clear of the blues for some years.

Jimi Hendrix, brought to England by the Animals' Chas Chandler, was instrumental in introducing musical virtuosity to British rock music. His pioneering guitar techniques and brash reinterpretation of the blues standards of his childhood fuelled the British Blues Boom. Hendrix had experienced the blues firsthand, cutting his chops with the likes of Little Richard, B. B. King, Sam Cooke, and Solomon Burke. His music also replicated the themes of the blues, particularly the association with all that is devilish and dark. With *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)*, Hendrix made a statement about his identity, just as Peetie Wheatstraw and Robert Johnson did some forty years before: 'Lord knows I'm a voodoo child.'

The British Blues Boom coincided with a burgeoning interest in the occult. In the 1950s Gerald Gardner ‘exposed’ traditional witchcraft and Alex Sanders professed to be a hereditary witch, initiated by his grandmother. The use of psychedelic drugs and cannabis was becoming widespread by those seeking a shortcut to spiritual experience. In the US, Anton LaVey’s Church of Satan was founded, part of wider movement against the establishment. Films such as *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968) and *The Exorcist* (1973) proved popular, reflecting a desperate need to fill the void left by the declining authority of traditional religion (Russell 253).

Also popular were the works of Aleister Crowley, a self-styled magician who promoted debauchery and excess as a valid path to enlightenment. Crowley attained an almost cult-like status among musicians including Jimmy Page and The Beatles, who included his image on the cover of their *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* album. Rhythm and blues musician Graham Bond believed he was the illegitimate son of Crowley and recorded albums of rituals with his band, Holy Magick, before falling under a train when he was thirty-six (Larkin 45). The Rolling Stones also embraced a satanic image. They released *Sympathy for the Devil* and were said to be intrigued by Robert Johnson’s devilish pact. Significantly, this posturing was more a rebellion against polite society than a reflection of satanic belief.

Towards the end of the sixties, Led Zeppelin, whose music is credited as the forerunner to heavy metal, arose from the ashes of an earlier R&B band, the Yardbirds. The band’s Birmingham-born singer, Robert Plant, undertook a pilgrimage to Clarksdale, Mississippi knocking at doors almost at random in an attempt to trace a surviving acquaintance of Robert Johnson. Later he was to report: ‘I’ve never been so ridiculous in my life!’ (Clayson 104-5) There were also rumours that Plant possessed a

glass jar containing soil from the crossroads where Robert Johnson legendarily made his pact with the devil. But it is guitarist Jimmy Page who is best known for his occult dabblings, as well as his passion for the blues. Page was an avid collector of blues records, scanning the mailing lists of US independent labels like Excello, Aladdin, Atlantic, and Imperial, and those British labels that began issuing R&B singles (Clayson 50). He was also a serious collector of Aleister Crowley artefacts and cultivated a deep appreciation for the practice of magic. With his astrologer, he once owned an occult bookstore in Kensington, The Equinox, which dealt in Crowley memorabilia. It was also rumoured that Page financed the reprinting of Crowley's works (Moynihan and Söderlind 3).

Page was so intrigued by the infamous magus that he bought Boleskine, Crowley's estate, in 1970. It included a single-story mansion on the shores of Loch Ness that Crowley had acquired in 1900 specifically to perform a ritual requiring water, mountains and a building facing a certain direction. When Page took over, he commissioned Satanist Charles Pace to decorate it with murals that would restore it to its 'original condition' (Konow 21). Page's fascination with Crowley was further evidenced by his insistence that 'DO WHAT THOU WILT,' Crowley's famous maxim, be etched into the playout grooves of US pressings of *Led Zeppelin III*. Page was famously linked to another Crowley enthusiast, filmmaker Kenneth Anger. He was commissioned to write the soundtrack for Anger's movie, *Lucifer Rising*, but only managed to write a half hour's worth of music before being dropped from the project (Clayson 225-26).

Intriguingly, it was widely rumoured that Led Zeppelin had entered into a Faustian pact with the devil just as Robert Johnson had done. This contract was

allegedly drawn up in 1968. Three members readily signed but bassist John Paul Jones refused (Patterson 106-7). The rumour came about because the band, in order to garner some publicity, had staged a record launch as a Black Mass, in the underground caves which originally housed the rites of Sir Francis Dashwood's Hell-Fire Club in the eighteenth century. Rumours of a diabolical involvement proved persistent. When drummer John Bonham died in 1980, having asphyxiated on his own vomit after an alcoholic binge, it was said that he died as the result of one of Page's experiments in black magic. Certainly, the lyrics of Led Zeppelin reflected Page and Plant's interest in mysticism and the occult; populated by references to Aleister Crowley's Thelemic religion, themes drawn from Anglo-Saxon and Norse folklore, and the literary mythology of J.R.R. Tolkien's works (Moynihan and Søderlind 4).

England's power blues gave rise to what became heavy metal music. Along with Jimi Hendrix, these bands with their slower, more ominous tempos, thick bass and guitar unison riffs, musical virtuosity, distorted guitar and a powerful vocal style littered with screams and growls, provided the musical vocabulary for the emerging genre (Welch 18 and 25). Blues soon became a cliché and heavy metal mutated from the remnants late in the 1960s, growing and evolving into a totally different genre (Brown 445); a reaction against the hippie ethos of sunshine and light.

The Birth of Heavy Metal

Many consider Black Sabbath to be the first heavy metal band (Konow 7), coming together in 1968, just as the time of blues in England was drawing to a close. Blues rock bands were prominent as psychedelia was winding down (Hoskyns, 'Prologue' 5), but it was Sabbath who gave blues the impetus to morph to heavy metal. The band, however,

were unaware of their significance, seeing themselves as nothing more than a really heavy 12-bar blues band (Clerk 13).

The four original members – John ‘Ozzy’ Osbourne, Tony Iommi, Terry ‘Geezer’ Butler, and Bill Ward – grew up in working-class families close to each other in the town of Aston on the outskirts of the industrial city of Birmingham. The area had been bombed heavily during World War II and was still in the process of rebuilding. Iommi and Ward cut their teeth playing guitar and drums in a straight blues band originally called The Rest (and subsequently Mythology), before joining forces with Osbourne and Butler to become the Polka Tulk Blues Band, later Earth. They were influenced by the music of the British Blues Boom including Hendrix, Cream, and Ten Years After. However, another band on the scene went by the name Earth, causing considerable confusion and the search was on for a new name (Turner, ‘Black Sabbath’ 27).

Osbourne tells the story of walking past a cinema, across the road from where they rehearsed; Italian director Mario Bava’s *Black Sabbath* was playing. Iommi said: ‘Isn’t it strange that people pay money to see scary films? Perhaps we should start writing scary music’ (qtd. in Walsh 147). Subsequently, Butler wrote a song with the same title and the band adopted the name. With their music and performances, they attempted to recreate the same sort of feelings generated by horror movies (Turner, ‘Sympathy for the Ozzy’ 96). Butler wrote many of the lyrics for the band and was heavily influenced by the occult novels of Dennis Wheatley, also drawing on a superficial understanding of the occult elements in blues lore.

Within a short time, Black Sabbath secured a residency at Hamburg’s Star-Club, playing a bleak though ‘progressive’ blues style with startling intensity. Their sound was morbid, achieved by tuning their guitars as much as three semitones lower, which

gave their riffs more depth and texture and could make a single chord sound huge and oppressive (Konow 7). The band adopted the infernal imagery that went with their name; wearing satanic adornments and performing original pieces that incorporated occult and devilish themes. Their self-titled debut sported an inverted cross on the inside front cover, the design originating with the record company rather than with the band (Turner, 'Sympathy for the Ozzy' 96). Robert Johnson may have sung about the devil but Black Sabbath made the diabolical relationship visually explicit as well.

From early in Sabbath's success, the band would receive many phone calls from Satanists, asking them to play at their Black Masses. Alex Sanders, 'King of the Witches,' approached them to perform at a 'Night of Satan' at Stonehenge. The band declined and Sanders put a hex on every member. When the band toured in the US they received death threats, the police were reluctant to let them perform and shows were cancelled due to the dark imagery of their lyrics. In Los Angeles, they were cheered by members of Charles Manson's family and in San Francisco, Anton LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan, held a parade in their honour. Black Sabbath had never even heard of him (Clerk 32-33). In response Butler said:

The whole Satanism thing was a big surprise for us when we came to America. The people in England, they don't care about that sort of stuff; it is hard to shock people in that regard in England. Of course, if we'd been putting cats and dogs down, then we would have shocked some English people, but with Satan, you just get laughed at. (Qtd. in Clerk 33)

Osbourne likens the members of Black Sabbath to actors. No one really believes that what they do on screen actually reflects their beliefs. When bands use occult themes in their music, he believes, they are doing it only for commercial success (in Turner, 'Sympathy for the Ozzy' 95-96).

Just a couple of years later, another band emerged that would even more enthusiastically embrace occult imagery. Known as ‘Pesky Gee!’ originally, Black Widow formed in 1970 in Leicester. Their first album, *Sacrifice*, contained mystical and demonic lyrics set to a contemporary heavy rock backdrop. They received advice from Alex Sanders on the art of magic and their stage show provocatively featured a ritual that climaxed with the mock sacrifice of a naked female. Two band members – Jim Gannon and Jess ‘Zoot’ Taylor – went on to write a heavy metal musical with occult themes. With rival bands Black Sabbath and Black Widow, Satanic imagery became irrevocably associated with heavy metal music. Both exploited the shock value to augment their audiences without an underlying belief in the ideologies described in their lyrics. Teenage rebellion became as easy as buying a Black Sabbath record.

With the addition of guitarist Ritchie Blackmore to the line-up of Deep Purple in 1969, all of the ingredients that would characterise heavy metal were in place. Blackmore added classical melodies into the blues rock mix, overdriving the whole lot with the distortion and volume of hard rock. Blackmore’s incorporation of classical melodies brought a new level of virtuosity to the music, enhancing the harmonic and melodic vocabulary of the genre.⁷ This approach would be fully realised in what would become known as neo-classical metal, a genre exemplified by complex musical structures with musicians exhibiting a high level of musical virtuosity as exemplified by Yngwie Malmsteen, King Diamond, and Steve Vai. Musical virtuosity became as much a part of heavy metal as occult themes and Satanism, and implicit in the combination

⁷ Deep Purple keyboardist, Jon Lord, was also classically trained though he favoured a fusion of classical music with rock but performed for classical audiences. His *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* was performed at the Royal Albert Hall in 1969 and more recently in 1999; see Walser, ‘Eruptions’ 266.

was the idea of Robert Johnson's Faustian pact. Musical virtuosity was bought for the price of a soul. Heavy metal was as much, if not more, the devil's music, as the blues had been half a century earlier.

New Wave of British Heavy Metal

England, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, spawned a wave of new heavy metal bands, partly as a reaction to the demise of the original metal bands such as Black Sabbath but also as a reaction against punk music. Known as the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM), the music tended to be crude, poorly produced and played by musicians with undeveloped talents. Prominent bands included Venom, Angel Witch, Tygers of Pan Tang, Anvil, and Saxon, though they were hardly acknowledged for their virtuosity or the clarity of their sound. The bands attracted large followings in the USA though they rarely toured there, predominantly because they were signed to small, independent labels such as Neat that could not afford to finance tours to far-flung territories. Only the more popular bands such as Judas Priest and Motörhead managed to penetrate the US touring market. In the aftermath of the NWOBHM, many metal subgenres sprang into existence; some characterised by their lyrics depicting occultism or Satanism. Prominent among these were thrash, black metal and death metal.

Thrash

Thrash metal is characterised by music that is harder, faster and angrier. It emerged in California between 1981 and 1983, fusing elements of the NWOBHM from bands such as Iron Maiden with 1970s and 1980s punk rock (Brown 445). British band Venom's 1981 release *Welcome to Hell* was a forerunner of early thrash metal. Venom, along with many of the bands that emerged into this burgeoning genre, embraced accelerated tempos, employing a characteristic snare drum pattern with rapidly picked single-string

riffs or two-string power chords. They frequently used a tritone interval called '*Diabolus in Musica*' (Devil in Music) which was banned from church music in the Middle Ages due to its apparent association with the Devil (see Walser in Dunn). In this context, such a diabolical association was encouraged and made overt by the pervasive use of satanic symbolism.

Metallica, with *Master of Puppets* (1986), were innovators of the genre, paving the way for significant subsequent developments. While in Europe, Onslaught, Venom, Danish band Mercyful Fate, and the Swedish band Bathory perpetuated thrash metal. Their albums were dark and aggressive and made ample use of diabolical imagery. In addition to Satanic symbols, thrash metal frequently utilised imagery associated with other spiritual entities such as ghosts, angels, demons and witches (Brown 449). The song 'The Haunting,' which appeared on the Testament album *The Legacy* in 1987, refers to 'Headless ghosts' and 'Shadow plays' and ends with everybody 'slain.' The imagery was intended to shock and disgust the mainstream but many found it genuinely disturbing. Deena Weinstein argues that it was an attempt to reclaim metal for youth, particularly males, by making the music revolting to an authoritarian culture (48). Further, it was music of alienation which attracted those elements of society without the power to conventionally rebel against authority figures such as parents, teachers or bosses. The music provided a release for pent-up emotions, enabling fans to transcend their frustrations and aggravations (Brown 446).

Black Metal

When thrash met the Gothic subculture, black metal with its exaggerated emphasis on Satanic and pagan symbols, came into being (Purcell 40; see also Introvigne). Again, Venom is the band cited as spawning the genre, forming in 1979 from the ashes of

several bands in northwest England. Consisting of Cronos (Conrad Lant), Mantas (Jeffrey Dunn), and Abaddon (Anthony Bray), the band emerged amidst the NWOBHM. With their 1982 album *Black Metal*, featuring a devilish face on its cover, the genre was established along with its moniker and Satanism became its defining theme (Sharpe-Young 414). The title song on Venom's album *Black Metal*, written by Conrad Lant, mentions key words like 'black,' 'Satan,' 'chaos,' and 'maniacs.' Following the chorus, which repeats the song title, listeners are invited to give up their 'souls to the gods of rock 'n' roll.'

Just as Robert Johnson and Jimi Hendrix believed they were of infernal stock, so did Venom proclaim their spiritual inheritance in the song 'Sons of Satan,' written by Conrad Lant for the album *Welcome to Hell* (1981). The 'bloodlust, hatred and scorn' evoked lead to the expression that 'Satan's child' is both 'a believer' and 'going wild.' Onslaught were another British band that fully embraced the infernal image of black metal. Their second album, *The Force* (1986), which featured an inverted pentagram on its slick cover, presented provocatively named songs including 'Let There be Death,' 'Flame of the Antichrist,' and 'Fight with the Beast,' written by Nige Rockett, which is 'unleashing the fires of Hell.'

For the purposes of considering these black metal bands, a distinction has been made between moderate Satanism and fascist Satanism. The former category accommodates organisations such as Anton LaVey's Church of Satan and the Temple of Set; whereas the latter category houses more extreme groups. Fascist Satanism is also opposed to capitalism, liberalism and democracy. The anti-Semitic undercurrents are a more recent addition to the genre. Organisations that fall into this category are typically small and include the Black Order, the Order of the Nine Angles, the Ordo Sinistra

Vivendi, and the Order of the Jarls of Balder. These organisations belong to a network called The Infernal Alliance (Introvigne). Satanists for their part view most black metal music as little more than adolescent angst; the anger and aggression giving a one-sided view of Satan, lacking the subtlety and seduction of their beliefs.

Though there is a genuinely satanic element in black metal, particularly in Northern Europe (cf. Moynihan and Söderlind), most bands and their fans are neither Satanist nor neo-fascist. The symbolism, extreme lyrics and diabolical imagery are intended to shock and as such are a protest against the pervasiveness of societal norms.

Death Metal

The death metal subgenre evolved from thrash metal in the early 1980s in the wake of the NWOBHM and is characterised by a high degree of dynamic intensity and high-speed percussion. There is a lyrical preoccupation with drugs and sex but also with Satanism, anti-Christianity and the occult. As with other subgenres of metal, death metal is a form of rebellion and Satanism is no more than an unimaginative rebellion against Christianity. It attempts to integrate that which is 'primitive' or 'animalistic' into the lifestyles of fans and acts as a safe outlet for those repressed feelings of frustration, anger and aggression. This form of Satanism is viewed as being cartoonish and ridiculous by genuine Satanists. Most fans are not knowledgeable about Satanism and do not really know how to recognise it, says Akercocke's David Gray (qtd. in Mudrian 254). Though death metal fans wear Satanist, pagan and occult symbols in the form of jewellery or patches, they are worn as a signature of identification with heavy metal, not as a religious or philosophical statement (Gross 125). One of the appeals of this music is that it is inaccessible to adult society. Rock 'n' roll was viewed in a similar way when it first emerged (Trzcinski 15). Satanic references within the lyrics only

signify a form of subversion. English bands that represent the genre include Napalm Death (who also founded the Grindcore genre), Nailed, Hecate Enthroned, and Akercocke, the latter referring to the Antichrist as their ‘guiding light.’

Conclusion

The lineage of heavy metal can be readily traced back to the early heavy metal bands of the industrial Midlands of England in the late 1960s, further back to the blues rock of the British Blues Boom, and ultimately to the pre-and post-war blues of the southern United States. Not only did blues lend its musical and lyrical vocabulary to heavy metal music, but also its supernatural and diabolical themes and associations. Just as blues provided a disempowered and disenfranchised people with a voice of rebellion and protest against the *status quo*, so does heavy metal music. Karen Halnon describes heavy metal as ‘carnival’ (34), raising the transgression ante to the extreme and challenging social rules concerning taste, authority, morality, and propriety, the sacred, and even civility itself.

Blues was known as the ‘devil’s music’ and became irrevocably intertwined with the legend of Robert Johnson’s Faustian pact where he traded his soul in exchange for musical virtuosity. As much as the musicians of the British Blues Boom were intrigued by the culture and musicality of the blues, they were intrigued by the genre’s diabolical associations. The interest in blues music and associated themes coincided with an occult revival which saw historical figures such as Aleister Crowley gain prominence. With early heavy metal bands like Black Sabbath and Black Widow, these themes were exaggerated in order to increase the popularity of the music. Once this diabolical association became established, heavy metal music was to embrace the satanic and occult imagery wholeheartedly, for the most part not as an expression of religious or

philosophical views but as a form of rebellion and protest against societal norms. The idea of the Faustian pact remains ever present in the background. Much of heavy metal relies on a high degree of musical virtuosity; the implication being that it is derived from Satanic or other non-Christian sources.

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